Points to be discussed in the article:

- The title assumes that ginseng extract containing poly-furanosyl-pyranosyl-saccharides is effective in preventing upper respiratory tract infections, while it only reduces the relative risk (not preventing). N.B. in objectives, they removed the word “preventing”

- Is telephone screening of subjects a valid technique for the inclusion in the study?
- Why the two samples are of different sizes? (170 vs. 153) then the final inclusion sample sizes are (149 vs. 130).
- Is their method of assessing subject compliance valid? I doubt it.
- Measurements are not consistent: (fever, headache, malaise, ear ache, etc) All of these symptoms could have been originated from other ailments other than respiratory tract infections.
- Subjects’ follow-up is not convincing (All measurements are subjective and bias will easily be introduced to results)
- They determined the sample size based on an average of 2.5 cold episodes per subject. Have they conducted a pilot study to determine this initial average? The average they have reported was greater. Have they conducted a pilot study to determine this average? The average they reported in results is greater and if used for the determination of sample size, the resulting sample size will be greater.
- Statistical analysis is generally acceptable. They used $\chi^2$ (Chi square) test for categorical variables. Also Fisher’s Exact test was used for the same purpose, but for categorical variables with expected frequency less than 5 in at least 20% of the cells. Baseline characteristics (such as age) were analyzed by independent (unpaired) t-test after log-transforming their data to make it normally distributed. It is obvious that the data is not normally distributed and they convert it to normal distribution by taking the logarithm. I wonder why they did not use Wilcoxon rank sum test or Mann-Whitney U test.
- They should have used Odds Ratio to measure the relative risk of using or not using ginseng.
- Adverse events (table 4). How they can make sure that these events can be attributed to ginseng?

This is a very brief and hasty evaluation. Many other points of discussion can be extracted from the paper. Happy Eid. I will now leave to Dammam to spend few days there during the Eid vacation.